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THE PREFACE.
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THERE are many ways of doing good. Scarcely any man is so unprejudiced as not to consider his own as the best. While every man ought to be restrained from doing injury to society, every man should be at liberty to do GOOD in his own way.

It has been said with truth, that “ *An ounce of a man’s own sense, is worth a ton of other peoples’.*” While no man should be above attending to advice, every man should spurn at the idea of submitting his own well-formed judgment to the opinions of others. That man is the most abject of slaves who does not preserve the springs of action within him, unentangled and un-biassed. Generally speaking, every man in

every station stands upon ground, the nature of which no other person so well understands as the immediate occupier; beyond certain general directions therefore, no man is qualified to give orders respecting its cultivation.

I hope these considerations will apologize for me in the minds of any of my friends, who think that at this period truth is to be wrapped in a napkin, and carefully hid in the earth, till it may be spoken without being attended to. Besides those whose business it is to speak, ought on all occasions to speak the truth proper to those occasions, whether their neighbours will hear or whether they will forbear. No man is justified in omitting a duty belonging to his character and situation, because it is probable his neighbour will notwithstanding be guilty of negligence, or even of crime.

I know how ready some are to exclaim against politics in the pulpit. I might as well exclaim against a volume of sermons being introduced into a manufactory. The
eloquent

eloquent but splenetic student of St. Omer's, contributed to make this cant fashionable. Fond of declaiming when he is unable to argue, and capable of raving in almost poetic numbers where he cannot refute, he on a late occasion found in this subject great scope for his harmonious invective. When attacking the famous Revolution Sermon of Dr. Price, he availed himself of this prejudice against politics in the pulpit, to render odious what he could not prove untrue; and to stain a character of unblemished integrity, and of distinguished piety, with the imputation of factious and turbulent designs. But if politics are upon no occasion to be introduced into the pulpit, the bible certainly has no business there; and it is highly absurd in government to appoint days of public humiliation or of public thanksgiving. Discourses on such occasions are necessarily political. I have no doubt that those of my brethren of the establishment who are in the habit of composition, did not pass over in silence the politics of the day. While they wept over the fate of an unfortunate monarch, and commiserated the disorders of a neighbouring country,

surely I without blame may be permitted to lament the distresses of my own country, and use my feeble efforts to arouse the sinking virtue of my countrymen, without hazarding prosecution for a libel.

Disagreeable truth is seldom seasonable. People in ill health are sometimes not only affrighted but affronted at being told so. To have our faults, and our follies pointed out is a benefit; but the benefactor in this instance is seldom rewarded by the gratitude of the receiver. Indeed, when people fancy themselves dwelling in a palace, it must be granted it is a little vexatious to have it told them, that they are in an old building just ready to tumble into ruins.

Abundant pains have been taken in this country, to feed that vanity and haughtiness which is but too natural to the people of this country, and which would of itself be sufficiently great. The press, the pulpit, the senate, the bar, and the bench, with united eloquence, describe with every art of rhetoric they possess, our enviable situation, the perfection of our laws, the mildness of
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our government, and even the superiority of our climate. In short, we have boasted so much of our unparalleled privileges, and our unexampled freedom, that the liberty of publicly examining whether or not these boasts be founded in truth, is the only point in which we are cramped. Every species of panegyric may be pronounced upon this subject, but, find fault at your peril. Those however who are so frequently telling us of our happiness, should remember, that people may be surfeited with the most exquisite dishes, and that wise men are inclined to suspect the truth of that which requires to be so often affirmed.

If the people of this country are in actual possession of all the happiness of which it is now so much the fashion to boast, and are in no danger of losing it; if they enjoy perfect liberty, civil and religious; if no grievances exist; if no lamentation can be heard; if our trade flourishes, and our manufactories find constant and full employment; if our poor are not distressed, nor our rich reduced; if the nation is neither in debt nor at war, but in every one of these

these instances exhibits the very reverse; I must say we by no means deserve what we enjoy. But long may this state of unexampled felicity continue, may it fill us with gratitude, may gratitude lead us to virtue, and the unmerited bounty of heaven make us sorry that we have so often and so palpably violated its laws.

I confess my prospects wear a darker and more melancholy hue. My country seems to me tottering on a perilous edge. I shall only be surprized if it does not fall. Nothing but retreat can save it. I do not believe that the present war is the sole cause of all the distress and danger which now exists. The storm which is now bursting has been long gathering. The judgments of the Almighty are now abroad. A period approaches long threatened by forbearing heaven; long foreseen and foretold by the wise and good; long due to the multiplied crimes of European states, though long withheld to give space for repentance and reformation. Nations are judged and punished in this world, individuals in the next;—but it is by the same general laws.

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He who can read in the history of his country, a gradual amendment of national character——can see that it has received calamity with patience, humility, and repentance; that it has received blessing, deliverance, and advantage, with thankfulness; that in the administration of its government, it has neither been injurious nor violent abroad, nor oppressive, partial, and tyrannical at home; who can discern *that* jealousy of the encroachments of power which is characteristic of a free-born people clearly comprehending and rightly estimating their privileges; who can perceive that love of virtue, and of virtuous character, which is inseparable from a belief in the christian doctrines, pervading the public mind.—Such a man, living in such a country, might look without any apprehension upon the most threatening situation of national affairs, because he would see all the characteristic marks of a sound and healthy state, of an upright and virtuous government, of a wise and free people, who, attached to each other and attached to their laws, would be ready on every occasion of hazard, to lay aside the little prejudices of
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party and sect, and unite together in the defence and support of their country.

Adversity and affliction, when considered with respect to the dispensations of providence, do not argue that the subjects of them are worse than others. The best characters, whether among individuals or among nations, require correction. If my country be in the most calamitous situation, I do not therefore argue that it is the worst. However, if it be better, it has had more advantages than any other.

I recommend it to the consideration of my friends of the established sect, whether we are not greatly indebted to that spirit of toleration in matters of religion, and to which the reformation gave birth, for the greater share of religion this nation is in possession of above that of France. I confess it gave me pain to see a lady* whose virtues I respect, with whose poetry I have been amused, and whose charitable endeavours to enlighten the poor shall be re-

* Miss Hannah More.

warded with better praise than mine, forgetting or over-looking this circumstance, and for a moment divesting herself of that mild and gentle demeanour, of that meek and quiet spirit, which is so ornamental to her sex, not only attacking with the fire of an Amazon, the atheism of Dupont, but judging the doctrines of atheism to be the prevailing ones in France, and believing that the Almighty offended at having his existence denied, is about to exterminate the infidel race. By the time this lady publishes her second edition she may recollect a saying of Plutarch, "I had rather have it affirmed "there is no such person as Plutarch, than "have it said that he is unjust and cruel." She may likewise think it not quite unbecoming, to exercise charity when she is recommending the practice of it.

At a crisis so alarming as this, it becomes every one to divest himself, and to assist in divesting others, of all that bitterness which bigotry in politics and religion seldom fails to produce. To say that churchmen or dissenters, republicans and levellers, tories or whigs, are the cause of all these evils, is the language of froward children,
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who when about to be corrected for some fault, each one cries out, "it was not I," and lays the blame upon his nearest companion. God is no respecter of names, of sects, and parties. And, *is there any evil in the city, and God hath not done it?* In the name of God then, let us adopt the language of men, and say "We are in a situation of imminent peril, and we will unite in every lawful endeavour to rescue our country. We will no longer defend slavery. We will abolish all sanguinary and oppressive laws. Justice shall be done to every description of people. We will reform our representation. We will trust our posts of honour and profit in the hands of none but virtuous men. Thus will we infuse a new portion of health into the constitution, and restore it to its ancient vigour, to its pristine purity."

Such should be our language as citizens. As private individuals let us adopt the language of christians, and say "We are all guilty before God, and we will perform without delay the duties of repentance and reformation."

With

With respect to the town in which I at present reside, I wish it all the blessings of peace and good order. I wish it were in my power to benefit it in a more substantial manner in its present distressed state, than by mere exhortation. I can do little more for my townsmen than tell them to be pious and sober; and as they now have but little employment for their bodies, to take more than common care of their minds. And to them, as well as to all my countrymen, should they pay no attention to my advice, I can only add, *If you will shut your eyes, and are determined not to see,* YOU MUST FEEL.

Could the nation be prevailed upon to become wise and virtuous, every thing else that is truly desirable would soon follow. Were we wise and virtuous, we should substitute frugality for extravagance, piety for profaneness, temperance for excess, benevolence for bigotry, christian humility for pride, and candour for asperity. Then that great Being, who is now scourging us for our follies and our vices, and who by the distresses he brings upon us only seeks to reclaim us to goodness, would have mercy upon

upon us. He would cause war to cease, bid commerce revive, and all the blessings of peace, order, and plenty, return to bless our habitations. At least, reader, let us remember it is your interest and mine to act agreeably to these truths. OUR LABOUR CANNOT BE IN VAIN. IF WE DO NOT SAVE OUR COUNTRY, WE SHALL SAVE OURSELVES.

A Discourse

A Discourse, &c.

ISAIAH LVIII. 4—7.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?—Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou bide not thyself from thine own flesh?

HYPOCRISY is hateful under whatever shape it appears. When it assumes the garb of religion it is of all crimes the most atrocious. And if the hypocrisy of

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one religion can be worse than that of another, the hypocrisy of christianity is of all religious hypocrisy the worst.

In no cases are we more likely to fall into this detestable vice than in those which relate to the performance of the ceremonies, and outward forms of religion. External rites and observances are but the shadow of better things—yet too often this shadow is grasped at while the substance is neglected. Instead of using the forms of religion as means proper for the attainment of an end, we stop short and rest in the means.

On the present occasion we cannot take too much care to avoid so black a crime. By being hypocritical we should affront the tremendous Majesty of heaven and earth in the grossest and most complicated manner possible. We should act in direct opposition to the most express commands of our Saviour, and violate every principle on which his religion is founded.

That

That no future blame may rest upon me for having mislaid on this occasion the feeblest of my Master's disciples, of my Maker's children, I have called your attention to a passage of holy writ in which the Deity himself has explained the nature of this day's duty, in language too express to be mistaken, too pointed to be misapplied.

All the records of remotest antiquity, and more particularly those which ascend to the origin of the world, agree in testifying that from the first creation of man, an impression has been stamped on the human mind so deeply as never to have been effaced——of an invisible God, the former and governor of all visible objects. To obtain the favour, or to avert the displeasure of this all-creating, all-controlling Being, or of those subordinate agents who were supposed to partake, though in an inferior degree, his nature and his power, temples have been built, altars raised, the smoke of incense or of sacrifice hath ascended, and the

the prostrate worshipper hath devoutly paid his tribute of adoration.

But notwithstanding this general propensity evidently existing in the breasts of men to acknowledge and adore the supreme though unseen power, which causes and governs all things, yet it is matter of common observation that this principle does not operate with equal force at all times. Perhaps no man ever advanced so far in piety, as not to experience in some degree what may be termed the ebb and flow of devotion. We may expect, therefore, in those who do not make the cultivation of religion their chief concern, to find a still greater and more sensible difference produced by the occurrence of circumstances and events calculated to awaken the religious propensity.

That uniform succession of events which permits us to descend easily and gradually into the vale of years, and suffers our grey hairs to lie peacefully down in the bed of the grave, we with propriety call the common

mon course of human life. But events sometimes take place to which we affix the epithets, great, surprizing, unexpected, and unusual. These are either of a very joyful or of a very distressing nature; when an individual is suddenly lifted from poverty to abundance, from oppressive circumstances and dark obscurity, to power, and grandeur, and renown; or when from the possession of every kind of happiness, he is plunged all at once into infamy and ruin. These are deviations from the common course of things, and do not enter into the usual calculations of individuals.

Thus, also, when a nation long abused and oppressed, bursts its fetters and regains its freedom; or when from a state of liberty and happiness, it is plunged into anarchy, is vanquished and enslaved; such events as these are striking because they are uncommon. Affairs are then in a violent and unnatural state; they are in a situation calculated to awaken the attention and to alarm the passions; they lead men to look

for some cause adequate to the production of such changes, and not finding any thing visible of sufficient influence to produce or control such mighty events, they are led to address thanksgivings or supplications to that invisible power who sits at the helm of universal nature, and orders all its affairs.

Whether these remarks satisfactorily account for the *origin* of days of public fasts and thanksgivings or not, it is most certain that the majority of mankind upon any great emergency are driven by a natural impulse, to seek protection from that supreme though invisible Being who is the author and governor of all things.

Unhappily for the order of the world and the perfection of social bliss, the character of the world's Master has been misrepresented and misunderstood. In consequence of the mistaken notions arising from this source, methods, in truth the most absurd, and in fact the most unlikely, have

have, in every age of the world, been adopted, for the purposes of appeasing the wrath and recompensing the kindness of heaven. Men have always been inclined to treat the eternal ruler of all things, as though he were a Being of like passions with themselves. When they have supposed him angry they have soothed him with promises, or deluged his temples with blood, or in the moment of gratitude have piled his altars with fragrant spices, poured forth rivers of oil, and decked his shrines with costly gifts.

On whatever occasion the Almighty may have condescended to look down upon with complacence, or receive with approbation, such offerings as these, it could in no instance be for the sake of what was sacrificed: it must always have been on account of the disposition of the offerer.

Though rites and ceremonies, sacrifices of animals, and offerings of the fruits of the earth, a temple and an altar, were among

the Jews the appointments of God ; yet it is most evident that none of these things were appointed for their own sake, they were only for signs by which the worshipper might express his gratitude and obedience to his maker, preserver, and governor. When the disposition of the offerer was in discord with his offering, the Almighty was uniformly found to despise alike the giver and the gift. This righteous determination of the Deity is so clearly expressed in the eloquent passage of the sublime prophecy you just now heard, and so plainly, so forcibly, and so frequently repeated in various parts of the Jewish scriptures, that any misapprehension in the mind of an Israelite on the subject in question, could only arise from the extreme of inattention or of perverseness, from wilful ignorance, or the stupidity of idiotism. Accordingly when the Israelites reposed themselves on the forms of their religion, and cheated their flumbering minds with dreams of divine approbation, without any regard to the arduous task of disciplining the heart, and training the affections

affections by substantial acts of piety, justice, and mercy, we find their conduct reprehended in the severest language of rebuke and invective, and an obstinate perseverance in their iniquity, threatened with denunciations of heaviest calamity.

Freed from the troublesome observance of tedious rituals by the coming of Christ, or rather made partakers of all the religious advantages enjoyed by the immediate descendants of Abraham, without being required to submit to that yoke of bondage, that burden of ceremonies by which they were oppressed;—We, O Christians, should be inexcusable if we converted the simple forms of *our* religion into food for superstition or hypocrisy. It is impossible for *us* to think that the Almighty can be pleased by any external observance. We cannot believe that by abstaining from food twelve hours, or twelve days (if it were possible) and continuing all the while we fast in a place of public worship, we can purchase the favour of almighty God. Nay, so far
from

from conceiving that it can be in the least degree pleasing, we can conceive of no action more detestable to him, unless it be accompanied with a right intention of mind, and dispositions suitable to the occasion. It would be a thought big with blasphemy to suppose that the God of eternal justice and truth, of unbounded goodness and mercy, could be bribed by any forms of this nature to authorize wickedness, oppression, and cruelty, or pass by the flagrant and unrepented violation of every principle of righteousness.

Need I add any thing farther to shew the folly and guilt of playing over a farce in the face of heaven? Need I use any other words than are necessary to describe a crime so heinous to excite against it your detestation? Is there a man in this place who would thus publicly and thus solemnly, calling himself a christian, and in the midst of a christian assembly,—I say, is there a single person who, in such a place, on such an occasion as this, would come here to
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break the most solemn injunctions of that Saviour, who taught and suffered, and died for him, by only *appearing* unto MEN to fast? Is there a believer in God, who would come into the temple of God, and in the most solemn recognition of his existence, presence, and inspection, offer mockery and insult to him under the pretence of worship, in order to escape mockery and insult from his fellow creatures—if there be I will give that man time to depart; I will proceed no farther till I have made a pause sufficient for his leaving the assembly.

Let it be remembered that this is an occasion purely religious; the civil power has a right to proclaim a fast, but the act of fasting has to do with none but God. God alone can tell whether it be a farce of hypocrisy, acted over to answer some temporal purpose, or whether it be a real humiliation, accompanied with that genuine repentance which always produces reformation.

To

To guard you against the crime of hypocrisy on the one hand, and the folly of superstition on the other, I have read to you at the beginning of this Discourse, a passage which cannot be made plainer, and which does not permit the attentive reader to hesitate a moment with respect to the nature of this day's duty, and the true and only acceptable and effectual manner of performing it. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

I am speaking in the presence of God, and in the presence of the people; I have nothing to do with the persons of individuals, my business is with God and mankind, with truth, reason, and revelation. Little should I understand my duty, and ill should

should I perform it, if I were to convert the pulpit into an engine to blow up the sparks of personal animosity and private contention into a flame. But it is my duty to explain and apply every general principle of righteous conduct, to expose every vice to just abhorrence, and to enforce, with all the energy I am master of, those precepts, moral and religious, which lead to virtue here and happiness hereafter.

The royal summons, in obedience to which you are this day assembled, is a signal of distress. It never appears but when the state is surrounded with circumstances of imminent peril. The alarm it is calculated to excite is at this time by no means unfounded in reality. The trumpet of war hath sounded its notes of terror through all the borders of Europe. Our shores re-echo them. The dreadful preparations for hostility are carrying on with the utmost alacrity. War be it just, be it successful, is always calamitous. It is one of the most afflicting scourges of offended heaven.

heaven. Who can paint its horrors? who can give a catalogue of its miseries, and say "This is complete, and without any omission?" What thousands perish by famine, nakedness, fatigue, inclement seasons, and want of shelter? How many victims fall a sacrifice on every day of battle? How many fathers, mothers, widows, orphans, maids, and sisters, raise the bitter cries of lamentation over sons and husbands, fathers, lovers, and brethren, forced from them to spill their blood in remote lands, and quarrels not their own?

Dreadful indeed is war when wantonly entered upon. If it be unnecessary, if it be unjust, its miseries are all aggravated, its calamities all doubled.

If it be foolish and superstitious to believe that the Almighty is the director of every event, and that he governs the world in righteousness, I confess that I am guilty of folly and superstition. I farther believe that God is merciful and long suffering,
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slow to anger, and abundant in forgiveness. He always warns before he destroys. This warning voice has long ago been heard, and with no uncertain sound in this country. It has spoken a language plain and intelligible to the ear of wisdom. It has cried, and still cries aloud for reformation. If the national ear is stopped, if the national understanding is quite darkened, so that seeing we see and do not perceive, hearing we hear and do not understand; why then this warning voice becomes a voice of denunciation and threatening. It becomes a voice prophetic of destruction. We some eighteen years back entered upon war most unjustly. We carried it on with the ferocity of barbarians. It was begun in iniquity, it was supported by a course of cruelties, at the bare relation of which humanity shudders. But mark what was the end of it. Humiliation, disgrace, submission, defeat, on our side; on the side of our enemies, success, exaltation, and triumph. We retreated impoverished, vanquished, baffled, and disheartened; those whom we thought we could frighten with threats,

threats, and conquer with boasting, led our armies captive, and made us glad to accept the conditions of peace they were pleased to offer us.

There were many wise and good persons who were from the very beginning of the war referred to, decisively against it. They deemed it a measure full of iniquity, and pregnant with mischief. They were not mistaken. The measure was wicked. Its consequences were calamitous. All that we reaped from it was the loss of one hundred thousand lives, and of near one hundred and fifty millions of money.

A war equally unnecessary, and if possible more palpably unjust, is now wilfully entered upon. Do not think that I am going to launch out into any invective against the government of this country. I know that it is not in the power of government to injure the people of this country without their own consent. It is not the government but the people of
England

England then, that I accuse. The war, the cruel, the destructive, the unjust, the successful war with America, was the war of the people. We are very ignorant of that constitution which while it continued in a state of health, made us the wonder and envy of the world, if we do not know that it is in the very spirit of the constitution that the people should remonstrate against such proceedings as are contrary to the true interest of the country. This is a privilege which our charters insure to us. When then the people express no disapprobation of the proceedings of government, they in effect sanction them; and they do this most evidently and undeniably, when they publicly express not only their consent, but their high approbation. This makes me say that the war with America was—the war of the people. And by the same proof so is the war upon which we are now entered.

I do not expect that my feeble voice can do any thing effectual towards the removal of this evil. But yet, called out as I am

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by the occasion, I must answer to the call. I must prevaricate in the face of heaven and earth, or speak according to the convictions of my own heart.

We are commanded by the royal proclamation to pray for the success of his majesty's arms both by land and sea in the war which we have just entered into.

Here I will not speak for any of my friends; but I, should I obey this mandate, should be guilty of a meanness and hypocrisy, which would render me an object truly worthy of all that abuse and detestation which mankind generally heap upon their best friends, but which is easily borne by a consciousness of good desert. I must declare as an honest man that I cannot comply with such a requisition. I will pay all due honour to all that are in authority, from the king to the constable—But I cannot help remembering that the same verse of the bible which bids me honour the king, bids me first of all fear God.

And

And when a competition arises between the king of England and the King of the universe, it is surely my duty to obey the latter and not the former. I believe the war we are now engaged in to be as unjust as it is impolitic; and in so far as I believe it unjust, I cannot ask the God of eternal truth and justice to succeed it. This I say in my own behalf. If I had not conceived myself at liberty to say this, I would not have said any thing from this place on this day. It requires no uncommon stretch of courage for any one to do this. All that the greatest earthly power can do is to afflict or destroy the body;—God can destroy both soul and and body in hell.*

Having said thus much concerning the occasion of our coming together, and thus much I thought it my duty to say, I pro-

* To escape *misrepresentation* at this time when speaking in favour of liberty, is next to impossible. But to guard against being *misunderstood* in what I have said in the above paragraph, I have subjoined an explanatory Note at the end of the Discourse.

ceed to say a few words on the wisdom of performing as we ought the duty of this day.

The terrible situation in which this nation stands, is undoubtedly owing to its vices. Our pride before the commencement of the last war, was looked upon by religious men to be so enormous, as to be a forerunner of ruin. In the course and termination of that war, it received a wound which many years uninterrupted peace and prosperity were unable to repair. It is however to be feared, that the temper of this nation has not been altered by the calamities which at that time fell upon it, and the burden of which presses it heavily to this day. We were overthrown, but we were not humbled. Our disposition seems to have become more haughty and tyrannical, as our means of supporting such a disposition have become less. Instead of reforming, we have if any thing continued to degenerate. I mean not to be personal; I single out no particular individual; I speak
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of the nation in its collective capacity. I speak of it as one whole, one great individual. And I ask whether every sober man of every description, who is at all acquainted with the true state of things, will not allow that luxury, dissipation, irreligion on the one hand, and bigotry on the other, do not prevail as much at this period as in any other within the memory of man. Is more respect paid to good men; is more honesty and integrity, industry, piety and regularity, to be found now than before we were afflicted? Or without drawing any comparison between the present and past times, does not a spirit of pride, of ignorance, of bigotry, and the most virulent party spirit, prevail in a degree sufficiently powerful to destroy the peace, order, and harmony of the best constituted government that ever existed.

Good men, aye and wise men too, had talked of the melioration of human affairs. Scenes of improvement and perfection had appeared in nigh approach to their minds.

Growing more pure, more enlightened, and more perfect themselves, they thought the world about them was growing so likewise. They thought the time was now at hand when the wilderness should blossom with roses, when the deserts should break forth into joy, when the mountains should sink and the vallies rise, when the crooked should be made straight and the rough places plain, when the wolf should lie down with the lamb, and the lion eat straw with the ox, when the infant should play with the basilisk, and the harmless serpent lick the feet of the pilgrim. In short, when kindness, mercy, and universal love, should descend from heaven to earth, pervade every breast, and unite the whole family of God in one general effort to expel from the world every thing that can hurt or destroy. But, alas! how is the scene changed, and where shall we look for the fulfilment of these promises! Ye visions of glory, whither are ye fled! Ye fair forms of ideal perfection, by what cold blasts have ye been withered! What unexpected frosts have nipped the opening buds of social happiness!

In an age boasting superior light, our own country has been supposed to keep pace in knowledge with any other under heaven. In riches, in liberty, in valour, and in fame it was inferior to none. I remember the time when I gloried in being born an Englishman. My ear hung delighted on the accents which praised my country. With the name of Briton, I associated every idea, of sympathy, courage, hospitality, and liberty. I would not have exchanged my native land, I would not have given up her sea beat rocks, her variable climate, her mists, and rains, and snows, for all the advantages of the most luxuriant soil, in regions where the sky is always blue and serene, the air always pure, and where nature dresses herself in her most enchanting vesture--because Britain alone was blest with freedom. And must I at length part with these feelings? Instead of cherishing, must I root these early prejudices from my fond heart? Shall I be obliged to connect the idea of base degeneracy with the title of Englishman, and live to behold the land of liberty

converted into a prison house of slaves? Shall I blush and think myself reproached when I am told by any one, "thou also wast born "in Britain?" However contrary to appearances, however opposed by reasoning, and even by facts themselves; yet let me in spite of these hope, that my countrymen only labour under the influence of some temporary infatuation, which will vanish away on the arrival of consideration. Let me believe that honest and ingenuous themselves, they have believed those to be like them, who were interested to deceive and betray them. Let me cherish the pleasing expectation that they will at length rouse themselves from those dreaming slumbers which portend destruction. That they will at length determine to see with their own eyes, and hear with their own ears. They will then acknowledge with gratitude the services of those faithful friends who have endeavoured to save them in spite of themselves; and drive with ignominy from the trusts they have betrayed, the selfish and the wicked.

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I once more repeat that the observance of a public fast will be a public detriment unless it be followed by reformation. Reformation as well as charity should begin at home. Action is the true test of repentance. The kingdom of God consists not in eating or in abstaining from meat. It consists in righteousness, peace, and joy, in believing. Let every individual then strive to reform himself, and when he has reformed himself, let him strive to reform all around him. There is more distress in this kingdom, at this time, than was ever known in any other period of this age. Our commerce is interrupted. In consequence of this our manufactures are no longer demanded. The universal stagnation of trade must be the ruin of thousands. The once opulent are reduced to narrow circumstances—the poor are deprived of the means of procuring necessities. What we have as yet seen, is likely to be only the beginning of sorrows. Loaded, as the nation is, with a debt which the shoulders of peace could scarcely support, and plunged
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into all the expences of a war, who shall say thus far the sea of trouble shall go, and no farther.

In this state of affairs, nothing can save us but the persevering efforts of awakened virtue, nothing can sustain the perseverance of virtue but the aids to be derived from genuine religion. Affliction is already fallen on this nation; an affliction that will encrease till it has produced either our amendment or our destruction;—the moment it is become unnecessary, that moment it will cease. We shall render it unnecessary the instant we return with full purpose of heart to God and goodness.

I intreat you then in the name of the God of infinite mercy; that God who is kind and long suffering; that God who wills not the misery of any, not even of the most wicked; I beseech every individual of you, as you value your own salvation, and the salvation of your country, to begin on this day to abstain from every species of
vice

vice and iniquity in which you may have heretofore indulged, and begin a course of active virtue, of pure and undefiled religion. Thus far it is in the power of the poorest of you to be patriots. Thus far it is in the power of the feeblest and most obscure to save their country. It is in the power of every one of you to be virtuous, and so far it is in your power to become the strongest supporters of your native land. A virtuous nation has Almighty Providence for its guard. From a wicked people omnipotence withdraws its support, and leaves it a prey to the destroyer. What is it that melts manhood into effeminacy, that unbraces the sinews, and palsies the arm of war; what is it but vice. And grant that our fleets and armies retain their wonted bravery; what are they if the Almighty is departed; what are they if the great and terrible God that rules the universe fights against us? Great God, shouldst thou let go thy grasp upon the winds, our fleets would become the sport of the elements, would sink like lead in the mighty waters,

or

or dash in pieces against the unrelenting rocks. Shouldst thou bring out of thy treasures the hail-storm and the whirlwind; shouldst thou commission thy swift lightnings, or shouldst thou blast the productions of the earth, and bid the mildew spread pale famine far and wide, the hearts of our mighty men would melt, the weapons of war would drop from their feeble hands, and they would be defeated without a battle. But what can hurt us if we become truly pious and virtuous. In that case God is for us and who can be against us. Let us remember that humiliation and repentance are only the beginnings of goodness. Piety and virtue, if genuine, are not unproductive; they always give birth to corresponding acts. Let our piety be then exerted in prayers to God for the reformation, and salvation of our native land. And let all our virtues exert themselves in action. If we have been more luxurious than we ought, and more expensive, let us retrench; for how many are there now---and how many more will there soon be in this distressed

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treſſed country, who will be glad of the fragments that fall from the tables of the wealthy.

I am ſenſible that I ſpeak at this time to ſome members of a part of the community whoſe ſufferings, wholeſome as they may have been in the effects produced upon their own minds, were unmerited from thoſe who inflicted them. You are ſtill perſecuted with calumny and abuſe. You are conſidered as traitors and rebels. You are marked out by the finger of ſcorn; you are accused by the tongue of folly and of ignorance. If you can, wait patiently. Your worth will be known, when the want of your aſſiſtance is felt. If you ſhould be called forth, and ſhould be principally inſtrumental in ſaving your country, it will not be the firſt time of your being ſo inſtrumental. I call the ſpirits of our departed anceſtors to witneſs, how much this country owes to that deſpiſed, inſulted deſcription of men to which we belong. I would not have us deſpair of our country
while

while we can continue to live in it, nor cease to love it because it has not made us the returns our conduct merited.---We are not altogether alone.—There are men not belonging to our body that deserve the name of Friends of the People.---They are indeed but few in number, but they are mighty in talents and in virtue. It is a small, but I trust, *a sacred band*, which is rallied round those last posts of retreating freedom, the liberty of the press and a reform in parliament. I wish by any thing I could say, it were in my power to obtain for this illustrious company the countenance and support of my fellow-citizens. The attempt is so virtuous that it will be glorious to fail; its objects are so important that if they are not obtained and secured, we are a nation of slaves. For my own part, I will not permit myself to believe without farther proof, that my countrymen are entirely lost to that generous spirit of liberty which breathed so ardent in our ancestors, and which immortalizes their history. I will grant they may be misled,
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they may be mistaken. I will allow that at this time they are both misled, and mistaken; but must they therefore always continue so?—No, no. However they may wander in speculation, their feelings are right. They may follow an *ignis fatuus* till they have lost themselves, but when the treacherous light vanishes, they extricate themselves with a vigour and perseverance truly admirable. They will resume their ancient nobility of temper; truth will at length gain admission to their mind; they will then be disposed with unanimous voice to hail the triumph of liberty in every clime, and clasp the defenders of that choicest gift of heaven to man, to their kindred breasts, with more than a fraternal love.

There are not merely ten, but I trust many hundreds of righteous persons in this country. I would still hope there is virtue enough remaining in the nation to save it from ruin. Without this, all other efforts will be fruitless. It is the good that stand
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in the gap and stop destruction from entering. It is the good that form the most substantial bulwark of a country. They surround it as with a wall of fire.

If I speak to any who are of a different persuasion from myself either in religion or in politics, I request their particular attention to what I am now about to say. Let us all remember that if we were all of different nations and different languages, yet still we are all brethren; and let us all resolve to do all the good we can to all who are made in the image of our common Father.

If this be a just advice, how preposterous is it in people of the same country and the same language to live in animosity. In what light ought we to view differences of opinion. Surely we ought not to consider them as just grounds of hatred and persecution. What would you say of a man who should go about and quarrel with every man whose apparel was of a different colour

colour or of a different fashion from his own.

Are you angry with me because I have seen reason to form an opinion different from yours, with respect to some civil or religious subject—I have the same reason to be angry with you for differing from me—Is it possible for us, my brother, to coincide exactly in every thing? If it is not, why should we not agree to differ. Are you a man? So also am I. Are you an Englishman? I am so too. Do you love your country? that is a passion which I also cherish. Are you a believer in the gospels? I too am a christian. Do you wish to be virtuous? I trust that is the chief object of my pursuit. Are you striving to become a partaker in the resurrection of Christ? It is the hope of future happiness beyond the grave, that animates my endeavours after virtue and holiness. See then, in how many points we agree—in how many material points—could you have believed it?—Why then, fellow christian,

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should

should you and I quarrel? Let us cultivate the spirit of christianity, which is a spirit of love, and then, though we differ in little things, we shall always agree in promoting each others' happiness by every means in our power.

Finally, May we all go from this place resolved to avoid vice, to practise virtue, to get above defiling passions, and by a persevering continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality. Then, though nation should rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, though war, and famine, and pestilence, should scourge the iniquities of mankind, though earthquakes should shake to their foundations the mightiest cities, and every government dissolve and fall to ruins—amid the wreck of nature itself we shall be safe—mansions of peace are prepared for the righteous.—There is an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. There is a city whose builder and maker is God. A kingdom from whence every cause of trouble
and

and of decay shall be for ever excluded. A land of rest, of peace, and joy, far above the reach of sorrow, pain, sickness, disaster, and death.—Inhabitants of this troubled country, remember that all but the virtuous will be excluded from this region of happiness, and make the cultivation of virtue your chief concern.

The Prayer.

O ALMIGHTY God! who art glorious and great beyond our conceptions, we desire in all humility and reverence to worship thee. To thee we owe our whole happiness. The entire fate of our beings is determined by thy will. May we therefore never omit to acknowledge and worship thee. Thou governest all created existence. Nothing can come to pass contrary to thy counsels. To thee we will look for protection; to thee will we fly in danger. Of thee we beg aid in accomplishing our

good designs, and implore thy blessing on our enjoyments.

May we ever discharge our duty, and make the best use we can of the faculties thou hast given us. After having done this, may we be able to practise the most entire resignation to thy will; and without a murmur, without a complaint, may we commit to thee our whole existence.

In the order of nature, in the government of the world, thou unitest almighty power to perfect wisdom and unbounded benevolence. Thou who art nothing but goodness, fittest at the head of the universe, actuating all its parts, and presiding over all its events. May the recollection of this fill our hearts with exultation and triumph. Believing that thy eye is upon us, and that we can suffer nothing but in consequence of the disposals and counsels of thy ever attentive and unerring providence, may we repose ourselves on thee with unbounded confidence. May we accept our
sufferings

sufferings with a zeal becoming thy faithful subjects—submit to them with loyal and hearty affection; and never indulge a repining thought.

We confess before thee the many crimes we have committed. Our rulers, our priests, and we ourselves have sinned in thy sight. We have been a nation highly favoured of thee, but we have returned thee evil for good, and hatred for love. Pour down we beseech thee, upon all orders of men, from the king to the peasant, from the noble to the beggar, a spirit of prayer, of reformation, and the fear of God. O let not our iniquities be our ruin. Sheath the bloody sword of war. In every country speedily bid it return to its scabbard. Make every nation that struggles for liberty, that choicest gift of thine to man, worthy to receive, and wise to enjoy it. Banish from this land the spirit of bigotry, animosity, persecution, and tyranny. Bless the king, and all the royal family; call them from the seductions of vice; enable them to break the snares of their situation, and endue them

them with the love of virtue and of thee. Give wisdom and integrity to the king's counsellors, and to each of the members of parliament. Give the dignity of virtue and unblemished manners to our nobility and gentry. Give zeal, humility, and knowledge, courage, piety, and compassion, to all the appointed teachers of religion. Give repentance and improvement to all. That thus we may become fit objects of thy mercy, be rescued from the gulph of ruin which yawns beneath us; and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ, we may be admitted into it, there to dwell for ever.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

(Referred to in p. 19).

I THOUGHT it my duty to say I could not pray God to succeed his majesty's arms by land and sea. The reason I assign is a sufficient one;—I do not think the war a just one. At the same time it is to be remembered, that it by no means follows that I am an enemy to my country, and one who wishes its destruction. In reading the history of my country, I find many of its measures detestable. And surely of measures, whether of this or any former time, a man may express his abhorrence, without becoming a traitor or a rebel. Those who utter falsehood, and for the sake of their own advantage pretend to approve of what they know to be wrong, are more likely to assume those characters than an honest man, who speaks according to the convictions of his heart. I am, however, very far from supposing every man a knave who does not call this war unjust and unnecessary. Very good men may believe it most just and most necessary.

Neither would I wish my readers to suppose me an advocate for all the measures of the French nation. While I rejoice that they have snapt the fetters of despotism, I lament and reprobate every act of violence and of cruelty. While I feel myself free to load with every epithet expressive of abomination, the sentiments contained in that horrid, proud, and barbarous manifesto, which now covers with deserved infamy the defeated Brunswick,—I, in common with every other friend of liberty,

liberty, strongly condemn the wild and unjustifiable declarations in the National Assembly which talked of universal conquest, the romantic orders issued to the generals, and every instance of imperious conduct.

With respect to our own nation, my reasoning upon its recent conduct is briefly this.—Every unnecessary war must be unjust. Where negotiation will answer all the ends of war, war is unnecessary. It cannot be shewn in the present instance, that negotiation would not have answered the end of war, because we would *not* negotiate with the present government of France. We have certainly nothing to do with the internal regulation of any state which is not under our dominion; to refuse negotiating with it then, on account of its internal regulations, was tyrannical in the extreme. There is every reason to believe that if we had chosen to negotiate, every thing might have been settled by negotiation. The argument for the justice of the war drawn from the circumstance of the French having made the first *formal* declaration of war, is idle; because those who first refused to negotiate made the first *actual* declaration of war. To shew that I am not alone in these opinions, I subjoin a short account of Mr. Fox's Speech on his Motion respecting the causes of the War with France, extracted from the SENATOR, Vol. I. p. 341. Debate on the 18th of February.

‘ Mr. Fox said he had done every thing in his power
 ‘ to avert the calamity of war. That no want of dis-
 ‘ position to support it could be imputed to him. But
 ‘ the more he felt himself bound to support the war,
 ‘ the more he felt himself bound to object to the mea-
 ‘ sures which, as far as yet appeared, had necessarily
 ‘ led to it. That he need not combat against the prin-
 ‘ ciple which defended the necessity of a war on the bad
 ‘ disposition

‘disposition of the French, the crimes they had committed and the internal government they had established in their own country,—because that was disclaimed by the ministry. It was what the French had done extending beyond their country, and affecting the interest of us and of our allies which he considered as the only principle on which the necessity of the war could be truly defended. In examining the alleged cases of provocation, he had maintained that *they were all objects of negotiation*, and such as till satisfaction was explicitly demanded and refused, did not justify resorting to the last extremity. From writers of the highest political eminence he learned “GRIEVANCES DID NOT JUSTIFY A WAR, UNLESS THE PRINCE WHOSE PEOPLE WERE AGGRIEVED HAD PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR REDRESS, AND STATED WHAT WOULD BE SATISFACTORY, AND HAD ALSO PRESENTED HIS SPECIFIC DEMANDS AFTER THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES.”

‘He dwelt with peculiar emphasis upon the inconsistency of standing unconcerned spectators of the fate of Poland, in which all the rights of nations and all the principles of justice and honour had been violated, by the Empress of Russia and the Prussian King—and yet be so keen to mark and stigmatize all the inconsistencies of the French with their former declarations.

‘Having dwelt very copiously on the impolicy of viewing, without emotion, the dismemberment of Poland, by three mighty powers, and considering the balance of power then only engaged when France has gained the advantage.—He deprecated of all things any thing so infamous as our being supposed to be a party to the abominable confederacy of Kings.

‘He could wish that if we had quarrels we should fight them by ourselves; or if we were to have allies,
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‘ that we should keep our cause of quarrel completely
 ‘ separated from theirs; and without intermeddling
 ‘ with the internal concerns of the French Republic,
 ‘ not burthen ourselves with any stipulations which
 ‘ should prevent us at any time from making a separate
 ‘ peace, without the concurrence or approbation of
 ‘ those sovereigns. He concluded with moving the fol-
 ‘ lowing resolutions :

‘ 1. That it is not for the honour or interest of
 ‘ Great Britain to make war upon France, on account
 ‘ of the internal circumstances of that country, for the
 ‘ purpose either of repressing or punishing any opinions
 ‘ or principles, however pernicious in their tendency,
 ‘ which may prevail there, or of establishing among the
 ‘ French people any particular form of Government.

‘ 2. That the particular complaints stated against
 ‘ the French are not of a nature to justify war without
 ‘ previous negotiation.

‘ 3. That it appears to the House, that with respect
 ‘ to negociation, his Majesty’s ministers have not taken
 ‘ such measures as were necessary to avert the calamity
 ‘ of a war—and, particularly, that they have not stated
 ‘ the specific objects which the war is intended to ac-
 ‘ complish.

‘ 4. That it does not appear to the House, that
 ‘ the security of Europe, and the rights of nations, have
 ‘ been attended to in the case of Poland, in which un-
 ‘ happy country the laws of neutral nations have been
 ‘ grossly violated.

‘ 5. That it is the duty of his Majesty’s ministers
 ‘ to advise his Majesty not to form such alliances as may
 ‘ prevent this country from concluding a separate peace,
 ‘ whenever such a measure may be consistent with the
 ‘ dignity and security of the nation.’

THE END.



A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN //

Tunbridge-Wells Chapel :

O N

ROMANS iii—28. and JAMES ii.—24,

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A Paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer.

BY MARTIN BENSON, A. M.

Minister of that Chapel, and Rector of Orgarwick, Kent.



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